

# **REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL BY THE CITY INTERNAL AUDITOR**

## **AUDIT OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT, TRAINING DIVISION**

**INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT (IAR) 070204-01**

**FEBRUARY 18, 2004**



February 18, 2004

Councilman Thomas Carmody  
Chairman, Shreveport City Council

Dear Councilman Carmody:

Subject: IAR 070204-01 - Audit of the Fire Department, Training Division

Attached please find the report mentioned above. Management comments are included in the report.

Sincerely,

Leanis L. Graham, CPA, CIA  
City Internal Auditor

jm

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**AUDIT OF THE**  
**FIRE DEPARTMENT, TRAINING DIVISION**  
**INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT (IAR) 070204-01**

The purpose of the executive summary is to convey in capsule form the significant issues of the audit report. The executive summary is a vehicle for reviewing the report and should only be used in conjunction with the entire report.

**INTRODUCTION**

As noted in the City of Shreveport's 2002 Annual Operating Budget, the Training Division provides training and education to the personnel within the Shreveport Fire Department. In addition, this Division provides training and assistance to other city departments as well as various public organizations and industries. Some of the subject areas offered include: Firefighting, Emergency Medical Services, Hazardous Materials, and a variety of other topics.

**OVERVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

The Internal Audit Office appreciates the courtesy, cooperation, and professionalism extended to us by the Fire Department, Training Division personnel during the audit.

Overall, we found that management is operating the division efficiently and effectively. Based on the results of the audit, we also believe that an adequate system of internal controls is in existence over the areas examined. However, we have identified some issues that management should review to further enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. Our findings address the following concerns:

- The Division may not be adequately equipped/staffed to handle additional training in the future.
- Lack of automation relative to training files resulted in difficulty verifying the propriety of adequate training for firefighters.
- Physical access to training files was not strictly controlled.
- Documentation in the training files was unsecured.
- The Division did not have a standard, operational policies and procedures manual.

# INDEX

Executive Summary .....	1
Index .....	2
Objectives .....	3
Scope and Methodology.....	3
Background .....	3
Conclusions/Findings/Recommendations.....	4

## **FINDINGS**

1. Staffing Needs/Assessments .....	4
2. Automation of Manual Tasks/Files.....	5
3. Control of Training Files .....	6
4. Unsecured Training Files .....	7
5. Policies and Procedures Manual .....	7

# **AUDIT OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT, TRAINING DIVISION INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT (IAR) 070204-01**

## **OBJECTIVES**

We have completed an audit of the Fire Department, Training Division. The objectives of the audit were to determine whether:

- Personnel is being trained in accordance with policy and regulations.
- Personnel is being trained in accordance with selected external regulations.
- A policy exists relative to training of other city departments and outside agencies.
- Control and operations over records management is adequate.
- Staffing and organizational structure are adequate.

## **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

Our audit, which covered the period of 2001 through 2003, was performed in accordance with applicable generally accepted governmental auditing standards as defined in Section A.20 of the Internal Audit Office Operating Instructions Manual. The scope of internal controls was limited to assessing the general controls surrounding the specific issues addressed and the aforementioned objectives. General audit procedures included, but were not limited to:

- Interviewing/discussions with appropriate personnel.
- Testing compliance with established or stated policies and procedures.
- Observing operations and ongoing activities.
- Reviewing/performing test work on files, records, reports, and any other applicable documentation.

## **BACKGROUND**

As noted in the City of Shreveport's 2002 Annual Operating Budget, the Fire Department, Training Division provides training and education to personnel within the Shreveport Fire Department. This Division is responsible for planning and delivering programs to personnel in order to keep them current on the new and changing methods of delivering emergency services to the public. Some of the subject areas include: Firefighting, Emergency Medical Services, Hazardous Materials, Supervisory and Organizational Management classes, and a variety of other topics. In addition, this Division provides training and assistance to other city departments as well as various public organizations and industries.

Although the Training Division has outlined numerous accomplishments, its most significant one would be receiving a Class One fire rating for the second consecutive evaluation by the Property Insurance Association of Louisiana. Two more recognizable accomplishments are completing the

confined space rescue training model and the drill tower to use for a live burn field and conducting the Citizens' Fire Academy, which was designed for community leaders and citizens who have a genuine desire to reduce the number of lives lost and the amount of property damaged in our city.

Moreover, the Division's goals and objectives included, but were not limited to, the following:

- To assure that all Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics are current and up-to-date in accordance with the local, state, and national standards.
- To monitor in-service training programs and maintain records as they pertain to the grading schedule of the Property Insurance Association.
- To assure all Hazardous Materials Technicians and response personnel are trained and in compliance with state and federal regulations.

For 2002, the Training Division had 10 full-time authorized positions and an approved budget of \$528,500.

## **CONCLUSIONS/FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Internal Audit Office would like to offer its appreciation for the courtesy, patience, and cooperation extended to us by the staff of the Training Division. Overall, we found that management was operating the division efficiently and effectively and that the internal control environment was adequate. We have, although, offered several suggestions and recommendations that may serve to enhance and/or improve the organization's operating ability. They were as follows:

- Perform an assessment of the staffing needs based on its objectives and future plans.
- Maintain and update the necessary training file records on an automated system.
- Develop a check-out procedure to control physical access of the training files.
- Secure documentation in the training files.
- Develop and implement a policies and procedures manual.

### **1. Staffing Needs/Assessments**

**Criteria:** Staffing of the Fire Training Academy Division should be appropriate to ensure that the division is accomplishing its mission, goals, and objectives. An adequate number of highly professional, multifaceted, competent staff would help to ensure that the Division is successful in reaching its long-term goals.

**Background:** The Training Academy is currently staffed with two Assistant Chief Training Officers, four Training Officers, a secretary, and an Administrative Assistant, as well as the Chief Training Officer. These training officers are responsible for research and development as well as the coordination and actual classroom instruction for training areas, referred to as cells. (The division is currently incorporating a sixth training cell.)

**Condition:** Currently, officers at the Academy provide an average of 220 hours per week in training.

This equates to approximately 37 hours of training provided per training officer per week. These hours do not include preparation time or pilot testing for any new training courses. Consequently, each training officer's 40-hour work week is fully consumed with the current training regimen. Yet, there is an increasing need for certain specialized training. Thus, firefighters lack the necessary expertise in new areas such as suicidal bombings, weapons of mass destruction, and underwater search and rescue that coincide with the national trend. Therefore, the Division may not be adequately equipped to provide training to its personnel to keep pace with these growing trends.

**Effect:** For the most recent national trends in certain specialized training, specifically homeland security and weapons of mass destruction:

- Training needs not being met.
- Inadequately trained personnel.
- Long-term goals and objectives not being met.
- Ineffective operations.

**Cause:** Insufficient funding to hire additional training personnel.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that management perform an assessment of the staffing needs based on its mission, goals, and objectives (short-term and long-term). Additionally, consideration should be given to addressing any new trends that may develop.

**Management Plan of Action:** The Shreveport Fire Department identified the need for additional staffing at the Academy in our 2003 Strategic Planning Meeting. We have included 3 Training Officer positions in our five year plan. The cost associated with this addition is \$50,000 per Training Officer. The Academy will continue to be creative in tailoring our training schedule to meet the needs of our department.

**Timetable:** The additional staff will be requested in our 2004 five year plan.

## **2. Automation of Manual Tasks/Files**

**Criteria:** For increased economy and efficiency of operations, manual tasks should be automated when practicable.

**Condition:** During our review, we noted that the summary worksheets of the firefighters' total training hours, as well as their accompanying school sheets and drill sheets were kept manually, but not provided via automation. This documentation was also not perpetually maintained in summary. As a result, verifying and reviewing the adequacy of training for firefighters was inconvenient and time-consuming. *(Note: For property insurance ratings' evaluations, hard copies are required to be maintained of the school sheets with the firefighters' original signatures.)*

**Effect:**

- Inefficient use of personnel and equipment resources.
- Inefficient audit trail.

**Cause:** Management has just recently obtained a reliable automated system on which to maintain and update files and records, as well as the available training necessary to use the system. *(Auditor's Note: This system, SunPro, will allow the management personnel in charge of training at each company or station to move names of firefighters from the "Rostering Module" to the "Training Module" when applicable - providing a continuous update of the training hours for the respective firefighters. This information will be automatically placed into the firefighters' electronic folder and the firefighters' training hours can be readily monitored by personnel at the stations, Fire Academy, or by the firefighter. Also, the roster completed in class at the Fire Training Academy will be immediately captured by the System. Additionally, the System will automatically identify personnel needing EMT refreshers to maintain their certifications; thereby, eliminating the need to mail a voluminous number of letters.)*

**Recommendation:** We recommend that management:

- Maintain the training records on computer.
- Perpetually maintain and update the training summary hours for the firefighters on the computer.

**Management Plan of Action:** The Shreveport Fire Department has been using Sunpro Records Management System for the last 3 years. This system has various modules that we are taking advantage of at this time. The modules are being implemented at various times based on the priorities of our department. Training is provided for each module as it is implemented. The Training Module is the next to be implemented and trained on. This project has been assigned to one of my Training Officers.

**Timetable:** We will begin training for our department the second quarter of this year. We should be operational no later than July 2004.

### 3. Control of Training Files

**Criteria:** Good management practices dictate that files and relative, pertinent supporting documentation be adequately safeguarded and readily available and retrievable.

**Condition:** During our sampling test work of the training files (specifically EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] training files), we noted that files were not strictly controlled. On several occasions, employees could not readily locate training files/folders to be reviewed.

**Effect:**

- Misplaced or lost training file documentation and relative information, possibly leading to difficulty verifying firefighters' completion of training/certification.



- Inadequate audit trail, which could possibly affect the Division's fire rating.

**Cause:** Management may have not perceived the potential risk involved.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that management develop a check-out procedure (i.e. sign-out form) to be used when training files/folders are removed from their original locations and/or transported between employees.

**Management Plan of Action:** Our records are available for staff members to review at any time. There are occasions when our personnel do not return them in a timely manner or they are placed back in the wrong order. The Academy will adopt guidelines that will require personnel to sign out files and sign them back in-in a timely manner.

**Timetable:** This procedure is presently being implemented.

#### **4. Unsecured Training Files**

**Criteria:** Good management practices and internal control policies infer that pertinent, supporting documentation be orderly and securely maintained.

**Condition:** Upon review of the training files during sampling, we noted that the documentation contained in the files was not secured in the folders.

**Effect:** Misplaced or lost training file documentation and relative information, possibly leading to difficulty verifying firefighters' completion of training/certification.

**Cause:**

- Management and/or responsible personnel may have not perceived the potential risk involved.
- This task was not a priority to the official record-keeper of the training files.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that management instruct the person(s) responsible for the training files to immediately secure documentation in the files as information is received and placed in the files. Moreover, existing files should be secured as timely as possible.

**Management Plan of Action:** The Academy will order file folders which have the ability to secure documents.

**Timetable:** Presently on order.

#### **5. Policies and Procedures Manual**

**Criteria:** A standard operational procedures manual can improve operations by providing uniformity in practices, establishing clear lines of responsibility, enhancing accountability, and lessening the

threat to continuity posed by employee turnover.

**Condition:** The Fire Department, Training Division does not have a standard, operating procedures manual that clearly communicates and defines authority and responsibility to its employees. Although the division does have policies and procedures that have been accepted as practice, it does not have a centralized, comprehensive manual for each distinct operational activity (i.e. office operations, personnel operations, specific training operations). (A standard policies and procedures manual would prove to be a very effective tool for this division due to its susceptibility to frequent employee turnover due to promotions, transfers out, etc.)

**Effect:**

- Operations may not be in accordance with mission, goals, and objectives.
- Policies and procedures may be violated.
- Existing laws and regulations may be violated.

**Cause:** Management may have not perceived the need for or assessed the benefits of a policies and procedures manual because of the “hands-on,” open and comfortable, verbal communicative management style used with the staff. Also, employees were trained under previous administrations by “shadowing” more experienced personnel.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that management develop and implement a policies and procedures manual which addresses key operations and activities of the organization. At a minimum, general office procedures should include the assignment of responsibilities for the various tasks being performed. This manual would serve as a reference tool for employees seeking guidance on the proper handling of day-to-day transactions and situations.

**Management Plan of Action:** The Shreveport Fire Department is working toward accreditation. This process will take care of the policies and procedures needed for our division.

**Timetable:** We are presently developing procedures. This project was started the later part of December 2003. Our goal for completion is August 2004.

Prepared by:

Tammy Zachary-Moore  
Staff Auditor

Approved by:

Leanis L. Graham, CPA, CIA  
City Internal Auditor  
TZM:jm

c: Mayor  
CAO  
City Attorney  
City Council  
Clerk of Council  
External Auditor  
Fire Chief